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REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report covers the period from the substantive session of 1994 of the Economic and Social Council to the substantive session of 1995. During the first half of 1995, four of the five regional commissions held their regular sessions. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) held its fiftieth session in Geneva from 3 to 11 April; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) held its fifty-first session in Bangkok from 24 April to 1 May; the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) held the thirtieth session of the Commission and the twenty-first meeting of the Conference of Ministers in Addis Ababa from 1 to 4 May and the 16th meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole from 24 to 28 April; and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its eighteenth session in Beirut from 22 to 25 May. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which holds its sessions on a biennial basis, did not meet in 1995.

Information on major economic and social developments within the regions has been made available to the Council in the summaries of the surveys of the five regions (see "Summary of the economic survey of Europe in 1994-1995" (E/1995/41), "Summary of the survey of economic and social conditions in Africa, 1994 (E/1995/42), "Summary of the survey of economic and social conditions in Asia and the Pacific, 1995" (E/1995/43), "Summary of the survey of economic conditions in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1994"

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(E/1995/44), "Summary of economic and social developments in the region for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 1994" (E/1995/45)).

Section I of the present report contains matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention; section II highlights the work of the regional commissions; section III covers meetings of the executive secretaries of the regional commissions held during the year, as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 1823 (XVII) and the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1817 (LV); and section IV deals with the impact of international migration in countries of destination and countries of origin, which relates to interregional cooperation in social development and is a subject of common interest to all regions, in response to Council decision 1982/174.

The annual reports of the regional commissions provide further background information on the matters dealt with in the present report. They are issued as Supplements to the Official Records of the Economic and Social Council. The report of ECE on its fiftieth session will be issued as Supplement No. 16 (E/1995/36); the report of ESCAP on its fifty-first session as Supplement No. 17 (E/1995/37); the report of ECA on the thirtieth session of the Commission and the twenty-first meeting of the Conference of Ministers as Supplement No. 18 (E/1995/38); and the report of ESCWA on its eighteenth session as Supplement No. 19 (E/1995/39).

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I. MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OR BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION

A. Matters calling for action by the Council

1. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

1. At its 759th meeting, the Commission approved the following draft resolution for action by the Council:

DRAFT RESOLUTION

Amendment of the terms of reference of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has recommended the inclusion of the Russian Federation in paragraph 2 of the terms of reference of the Commission, in addition to paragraph 3, with the objective of enabling the appropriate programme activities of the Commission to be extended to that country, in particular its Siberian and far-eastern regions,

Decides to amend paragraph 2 of the terms of reference of the Commission accordingly.

2. Economic Commission for Africa

2. At the thirtieth session of the Commission and twenty-first meeting of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning, held in Addis Ababa from 1 to 4 May 1995, the Conference of Ministers approved the following draft resolutions for action by the Council:

DRAFT RESOLUTION I

Implementation of phase II of the programme for the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling resolution 710 (XXVI) of 12 May 1991 of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa, 1/ in which the Conference of Ministers adopted the programme for the Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa,

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1/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1991, Supplement No. 16 (E/1991/37), chap. IV.

Referring to General Assembly decision 46/456 of 20 December 1991 in which the Assembly approved the programme for the Second Decade, and Assembly decision 48/455 of 21 December 1993 concerning the provision of resources for its implementation,

Recalling resolution 93/89 of 13 March 1993, 2/ of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning on the implementation of the programme for the Second Decade,

Having considered the mid-term evaluation of the programme for the Second Decade and the action programme derived therefrom,

Reaffirming the continued relevance and critical importance of the Second Decade, especially for achieving the goals of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, 3/

Noting with concern the low level of programme implementation due to a lack of resources,

Recalling that new projects to be proposed for inclusion in the programme for the Second Decade should conform to the principles and criteria already adopted and be submitted to the executing agencies concerned, specifying, among other things:

(a) The time-frame for implementation,

(b) Resource requirements, resource availability and prospective sources,

(c) A description of tasks to be performed and their assignment among the various partners,

1. Urges member States to make every effort to implement the programme for the Second Decade by undertaking, inter alia, the following specific activities:

(a) Facilitating and encouraging national coordinating committees to carry out activities by providing those committees with the necessary human and financial resources to enable them to accomplish their assigned tasks;

(b) According priority to national projects that contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Second Decade;

(c) Coordinating and strengthening national efforts in fund-raising, so as to be able to gain access to regional indicative planning figures through such sources as the Fourth Lomé Convention, for the implementation of the Decade programme;

2/ DOC/UNTACDA/93/04.

3/ A/46/651, annex.

(d) Taking into account the environmental impact of all transport and communications development projects;

2. Invites member States and intergovernmental organizations to involve the subregional and subsectoral working groups in the design of regional action programmes concerning transport and communications and provide them with all the assistance necessary to participate effectively in the implementation of the programme of the Second Decade;

3. Requests intergovernmental organizations to take an active part in the programme for the Second Decade by carrying out, within their regular work programmes, the activities set out in the programme for the Second Decade, giving priority to those activities that promote regional integration;

4. Requests the United Nations Development Programme to increase the level of its support for the Second Decade by funding part of the regional action programme for the implementation of the second phase of the programme for the Second Decade;

5. Invites all donors to contribute further to the implementation of the programme approved by the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning at its tenth meeting;

6. Requests the General Assembly to provide the Economic Commission for Africa with additional resources, allocated within the regular budget, to enable it to pursue the major activities of the programme for the Second Decade;

7. Requests the African, Caribbean and Pacific Coordinating Ministers of the European Development Fund to give appropriate priority to the projects and programmes for the Second Decade in the preparation of their national and regional indicative programmes under the second financial protocol of the Fourth Lomé Convention;

8. Calls upon the development banks and participating financial institutions to continue to work with the programme machinery of the Second Decade to provide coordinated and efficient support to the development of transport and communications in Africa;

9. Appeals to the World Bank to maintain a high level of involvement in and contribution to the implementation of the programme for the Second Decade;

10. Requests African financial institutions to provide further support to the programme for the Second Decade, in particular by taking into account systematically the guidelines and priorities of the Second Decade in the preparation of the action plans for African countries;

11. Requests the subsectoral working groups to initiate such regional action as would provide a framework for intervention by those countries that plan to commercialize or privatize their transport and communications sector;

12. Decides that the Resource Mobilization Committee for the Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa shall henceforth be known as the

Advisory Committee on Programme Promotion for the Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa, and adopts the terms of reference of that Committee, as set out in the report of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning on its 10th meeting;

13. Requests the Advisory Committee to emphasize assistance for member States in seeking, arranging and mobilizing funds for projects approved under the programme for the Second Decade;

14. Appeals to all financial institutions that are members of the Advisory Committee to play a more active role in the efforts geared to supporting the Advisory Committee's mission by providing it with the required technical expertise;

15. Requests the subsectoral working groups to assist in the evaluation of projects falling within their areas of competence, and in the coordination and integration of the Africa regional work programmes of the specialized agencies with those of the Second Decade;

16. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to:

(a) Disseminate systematically among all partners in the Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa information on the implementation of the Second Decade through workshops, seminars, symposia, other forums and information bulletins;

(b) Play a far more active role in coordinating the programme for the Second Decade and strengthen the capacity of the Commission to provide the necessary technical support of programme implementation;

(c) Ensure that future evaluations of the implementation of the programme for the Second Decade are based on a critical analysis of the degree to which Decade objectives have been achieved;

(d) Prepare a consolidated report on the status of implementation of all the projects for the Second Decade, based on reports prepared by member States and intergovernmental organizations on the status of their projects.

DRAFT RESOLUTION II

Programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1996-1997

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and subsequent relevant resolutions on programme planning,

Recalling its resolutions 1992/52 of 31 July 1992, entitled "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields: strengthening the role and functions of the Economic Commission for Africa" and

resolution 769 (XXVIII) of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa on strengthening the role of the Commission to provide team leadership and coordination of United Nations system activities with a regional perspective in Africa, 4/

Reaffirming that measures to improve the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the Secretariat and to improve the planning, programming and budgeting process, as called for by the General Assembly in resolution 47/212 of 23 December 1992, would significantly contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the Commission in dealing with the development challenges facing the Africa region,

Conscious of the importance of the ongoing measures to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations resulting from General Assembly resolution 46/235 of 13 April 1992, on the basis of which resources and activities have been decentralized from Headquarters to the Economic Commission for Africa during the biennium 1994-1995,

Having examined the proposed programme of work and priorities of the Economic Commission for Africa for the biennium 1996-1997, 5/

Taking note of the new organizational structure which, among other things, is aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the Commission,

Appreciative of the redeployment of resources to the Commission's regular programme of technical cooperation to enhance the multidisciplinary regional advisory services it renders to member States,

Noting with appreciation the grant made available to the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, which has contributed significantly to the operational capacity of the Commission,

1. Endorses the proposed programme of work and priorities of the Economic Commission for Africa for the biennium 1996-1997;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure, through the Administrative Committee on Coordination, that United Nations programmes and activities for the Africa region are coordinated and harmonized for cost-effectiveness, synergy and greater impact;

3. Urges the Secretary-General, in making his proposals for the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, to take into consideration the special development needs of the Africa region, by stressing the need to make available to the Commission adequate resources to enable it to carry out fully those activities under programme 30 (Regional cooperation for development in Africa) and programme 45 (African critical economic situation, recovery and

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4/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 18 (E/1993/38), chap. IV.

5/ E/ECA/CM.21/12.

development), in particular subprogramme 2 thereof (Monitoring, assessment and follow-up of the implementation of action programmes, including their financial aspects);

4. Urgently appeals to the General Assembly to convert the grant provided to the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning to establish core posts in the regular budget, as called for by the Economic and Social Council in resolutions 1992/51 of 31 July 1992 and 1993/68 of 30 July 1993;

5. Appeals to the Committee for Programme and Coordination to consider these proposals favourably at its thirty-fifth session, and recommend, through the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995, their adoption by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session;

6. Calls upon the General Assembly, through its Second and Fifth Committees, to take the necessary action to ensure that adequate resources are made available to the Commission for the implementation of its work programme;

7. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to endeavour to maintain and strengthen the cohesion of the programme of technical cooperation, especially at the implementation level.

3. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

3. At its eighteenth session held in Beirut from 22 to 25 May 1995, the Commission approved the following draft resolutions for action by the Council:

DRAFT RESOLUTION I

Establishment of a Committee on Energy within the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Council,

Aware that petroleum and gas are not the only energy resources available in States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, but that renewable sources of energy are also available, and aware also that close regional cooperation is needed to strengthen the capabilities of those States for developing the use of renewable sources of energy,

Aware of the importance of coordinating activities in the field of energy with efforts to protect the environment in States members of the Commission, as well as the importance of related issues pertaining to the development, transport and use of energy sources, the rationalization of their use and the impact of their use on the environment and on the sustainable development of those States,

Conscious of the importance of the participation of the competent authorities of the States members of the Commission in the planning and

development of the programmes of the secretariat of the Commission in the field of energy and in monitoring their implementation,

Inspired by the steps taken by other regional commissions for the establishment of specialized committees on various energy areas to ensure the coordination of action at the regional level,

1. Decides to establish a Committee on Energy, within the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, made up of representatives of the States members of the Commission who are specialists in the field of energy, which will undertake the following tasks:

(a) Participation in the establishment and formulation of priorities for the programme of work and medium-term plan in the field of energy;

(b) Monitoring of developments in the field of energy in the States members of the Commission;

(c) Monitoring of the progress achieved in the activities of the secretariat of the Commission in the field of energy;

(d) Follow-up of international and regional conferences, participation of member States in them and coordination of regional efforts relating to the implementation of resolutions and recommendations;

2. Also decides that, starting in 1996, the Committee on Energy will hold its meetings every two years;

3. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to follow up the implementation of the present resolution and report thereon to the Commission at its nineteenth session.

DRAFT RESOLUTION II

Establishment of a Committee on Water Resources within the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Council,

Conscious of the importance of water security in view of the scarcity of water resources in the States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Conscious also of the importance of developing the water resources of those States and rationalizing their use,

Taking into account the need to monitor scientific and technological developments in the use of both traditional and non-traditional water sources,

Also taking into account the importance of the participation of the competent authorities of the States members of the Commission in the planning,

development and monitoring of the programmes of the secretariat of the Commission in the field of water resources,

1. Decides to establish a Committee on Water Resources within the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, made up of representatives of the States members of the Commission who are specialists in the field of water resources, which will undertake the following tasks:

(a) Participation in the establishment and formulation of priorities for the programme of work and medium-term plan in the field of water resources;

(b) Monitoring of developments in the field of water resources in the States members of the Commission;

(c) Monitoring of the progress achieved in the activities of the secretariat of the Commission in the field of water resources;

(d) Follow-up of international and regional conferences, participation of member States in them and coordination of regional efforts relating to the implementation of resolutions and recommendations;

2. Also decides that, starting in 1996, the Committee on Water Resources will hold its meetings every two years;

3. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to follow up the implementation of the present resolution and report thereon to the Commission at its nineteenth session.

B. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

1. Economic Commission for Europe

Decision A (50). The work of the Commission and its future activities

4. The Commission reaffirmed its determination to continue to implement decisions O (45) and P (45). It approved its programme of work for the biennium 1995-1996 and endorsed, in principle, subject to review at its fifty-first session, its programme of work for the period 1995-1999. The Commission invited the Executive Secretary to study possible action on General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions and to contribute in particular to the follow-up at the regional level of the Fourth World Conference on Women. It requested the Executive Secretary to bring the work of the Commission to the attention of the Secretary-General. It invited the Commission's subsidiary bodies to continue work on issues concerning the expansion of trade of countries in transition, including improvements in market access and in market competitiveness, and in the field of population.

5. The Commission urged the Secretary-General to consider the possibility of further strengthening the Commission and providing the resources necessary for it to fulfil its mandate, taking into account the considerable increase of its

membership from 34 to 55 countries and the launching of the ECE programme of assistance to countries in transition. With a view to making optimal use of available resources, it requested its principal subsidiary bodies to consider measures aimed at rationalizing their proceedings.

6. The Commission decided to convene its fifty-second jubilee session, in 1997, at a high level with a view to adopting a declaration on strengthening economic cooperation in Europe, which would define strategic directions of future activities of ECE, reflecting new realities in the ECE region and taking into account the needs and priorities of economic development of the countries in transition as well as budget capacity and possible recommendations of the ECE ad hoc meeting on savings.

Decision B (50). Diversification of forms and methods of the activities of the Economic Commission for Europe designed to assist countries of the region in transition to a market economy and their integration with the European and the global economy

7. Acknowledging the importance of further diversification of forms and methods of ECE activities designed to assist countries in transition to a market economy and their integration with the European and the global economy, the Commission confirmed the importance of continuing the programme of workshops and seminars. It noted the preliminary list of experts and specialists in problems of privatization and transition of different sectors of the economy to market conditions, whose services could be provided to interested countries in transition, and recommended that the Executive Secretary explore the possibility of establishing, in one of the interested countries in transition and with financial support of such organizations and institutions as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, training courses in market economy matters for representatives of the administration and the business community of those countries.

8. ECE decided to continue to provide financial assistance to the countries in transition for their participation in the ECE programme of workshops and seminars through the Trust Fund for Assistance to Countries in Transition. The Commission also recommended that the Secretary-General consider the possibility of using ECE as a focal point to facilitate the promotion and enhancing of mutual cooperation with United Nations global programmes, organs and specialized agencies within their respective mandates.

Decision C (50). Strengthening of the ECE Regional Advisory Services Programme

9. Noting that the establishment and activities of the ECE Regional Advisory Services Programme was a practical contribution of the Commission to the restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat in the economic and social

sectors, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to address, in an appropriate form, a request to the Secretary-General to allocate adequate resources within the existing United Nations regular budget for the implementation of the Programme. It also called upon the ECE secretariat to intensify cooperation between its Regional Advisory Services Programme and other relevant organizations, in particular UNDP, the Commission of the European Communities, OECD and EBRD.

Decision D (50). Economic cooperation in the Mediterranean in the light of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

10. The Commission noted the growing awareness of the need for joint efforts by all Mediterranean countries to strengthen economic, social, cultural and environmental cooperation and to promote stability and peace in the Mediterranean region in the light of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the Helsinki Document of 1992 and the Budapest Document of 1994. It called upon the Executive Secretary to continue to undertake action-oriented studies and to identify effective means of enhancing economic cooperation in the Mediterranean, and requested him to continue to cooperate with relevant United Nations bodies in order to secure interaction with Mediterranean countries not members of the Commission. It also called upon member States to assist the Commission in its current activities on the analysis of macroeconomic and sectoral policies, with a view to taking into account the Mediterranean dimension of ECE.

11. The Commission noted the report being prepared jointly by ECE and ECA concerning the studies undertaken in the biennium 1994-1995 in the framework of the project for the Europe-Africa permanent link through the Strait of Gibraltar, to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995. It also noted the recognition given by the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) at the Budapest Summit of December 1994 to the role played by ECE in support of the economic dimension priorities of OSCE and called upon Mediterranean countries to work closely with OSCE to intensify the dialogue between OSCE and non-participating Mediterranean States.

Decision E (50). Cooperation and sustainable industrial development

12. The Commission confirmed its determination to assist countries in transition in their efforts towards sustainable industrial development, with a view to improving their competitiveness in international markets, and decided to hold in 1996, during its fifty-first session, a round-table conference on cooperation and sustainable industrial development, with a view to elaborating concrete proposals on strengthening cooperation in this area, including modalities for assistance to the countries in transition.

Decision F (50). Strengthening cooperation between the Economic Commission for Europe and the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe

13. The Commission welcomed the recognition by OSCE at the Budapest Summit of December 1994 of the role of ECE and other international organizations and institutions in support of the economic dimension priorities of OSCE and called upon its subsidiary bodies to contribute to the practical follow-up of those priorities. It requested the Executive Secretary to implement his proposals for cooperation between the ECE and OSCE secretariats, paying special attention to the ECE contribution to the preparation of the third meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum on the theme "Regional economic cooperation in the fields of trade, investment and infrastructure", focusing on ECE activities in the areas under discussion, the insights ECE studies give in these fields, and on how the ECE output may be of practical use to policy makers and the business community.

Decision G (50). Cooperation in the field of environment and sustainable development

14. Recognizing the need to ensure that policies in all sectors are consistent with sustainable development and for all subsidiary bodies to strengthen their activities in environment and sustainable development, the Commission took note of the report of the Committee on Environmental Policy on problems and bottlenecks in the ECE activities in this area and endorsed the Committee's recommendations. It invited ECE member States and the European Union to continue to support the further development of the "Environment for Europe" process and the preparations for the ministerial conference to be held in Sofia in October 1995, and requested the Executive Secretary to continue to support both the Working Group of Senior Governmental Officials in coordinating this work and the Government of Bulgaria in its organizational work for the Conference.

15. The Commission called upon the Inland Transport Committee and the Committee on Environmental Policy to cooperate in the preparation of the Regional Conference on Transport and the Environment, to take place in 1996. It also called again upon all ECE member States and the European Union to consider, if they had not already done so, the earliest possible ratification of or accession to the various ECE conventions and protocols in the field of protection of the environment, and invited all potential donors to consider the financial and technical needs of the countries in transition in implementing the provisions of those conventions and protocols.

Decision H (50). Cooperation in the field of transport

16. Conscious of the continuing difficulties of countries in transition to expand market economy mechanisms in all fields of transport and the importance of an efficient, safe and sustainable network of transport infrastructures meeting accepted and further developed environmental standards, the Commission

welcomed the decisions of the Inland Transport Committee aimed at intensifying assistance to countries in transition.

17. The Commission welcomed the second Road Safety Week in the ECE region (27 March-2 April 1995). It emphasized the necessity of an urgent revision of the provisions of the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets to provide for stable long-term solutions and also to reduce the risk of possible customs fraud and smuggling. It endorsed the decision to set up an International Working Group for the future drafting of a European agreement concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by inland waterways, and noted with satisfaction the completion of the first step of the revision of the 1958 Agreement concerning the adoption of uniform conditions of approval and reciprocal recognition of approval for motor vehicle equipment and parts. The Commission urged the Inland Transport Committee to complete the regulations for combined transport on inland waterways and possibly for coastal shipping.

18. The Commission called for a decision to be taken before the end of 1995 on the date and venue of the Regional Conference on Transport and the Environment.

Decision I (50). Cooperation in the field of energy

19. The Commission underlined the importance of energy-related questions in regional economic cooperation, in particular as regards assistance to countries in transition, and confirmed the importance of the programme of workshops and seminars and the services of the regional adviser to those countries. It welcomed the promotion and development of a market-based gas industry in economies in transition - the "Gas Centre" - and invited member Governments and relevant international organizations, institutions and programmes to participate in and contribute to the Gas Centre and the Energy Efficiency 2000 Project. It recalled with satisfaction the signing of the European Energy Charter Treaty and its Energy Efficiency Protocol, having in mind that the Commission could make a valuable contribution to supporting the implementation of the Charter.

Decision J (50). Cooperation in the field of human settlements

20. Recognizing the relevance of good urban management and an efficient housing and construction sector in supporting the transition process, the Commission called upon the Committee on Human Settlements and other ECE principal subsidiary bodies to provide policy guidance and practical expertise on reforming the housing and construction sector in transition countries, supporting the reform in the financial sector by developing appropriate schemes for financing housing and infrastructure investments, accelerating the modernization and improving the maintenance of the housing stock, assisting the development of an efficient land management system, and developing guidelines for urban planning. It also invited the Executive Secretary in cooperation with the Committee on Human Settlements to initiate preparations in the ECE region for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

2. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Resolution 51/1. Statute of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific

21. Recalling its resolution 50/5 and recommending that the Institute be accorded the legal status of a subsidiary body of the Commission, the Commission adopted the Statute of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific.

Resolution 51/2. Strengthening regional cooperation in human resources development in Asia and the Pacific

22. The Commission welcomed the thought-provoking proposals presented in the theme study. Convinced that human resources development was fundamental to all efforts to sustain economic growth, alleviate poverty, bridge the income distribution gap and improve the quality of life, it invited its members and associate members to strengthen the scope and effectiveness of their policies, plans and programmes and identify their potential for regional cooperation in human resources development, and it invited concerned intergovernmental bodies to give priority to support for such regional cooperation. The Commission requested the secretariat to examine the feasibility of organizing a regional network of centres of excellence in development policy analysis, seek the continued advice of its Panel of Eminent Persons, highlight human resources development in the next medium-term plan, devote particular attention to women in the development of human resources and monitor and assess progress achieved.

Resolution 51/3. Organization of annual sessions of the Commission

23. The Commission, noting its continuing efforts to enhance the effectiveness of its work and streamline its working arrangements, decided to meet annually for up to seven working days, the last three days at the ministerial level. It endorsed the recommendations of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, as contained in document E/ESCAP/1010, for implementation in accordance with its terms of reference and rules of procedure, and decided to review the new arrangements at its fifty-third session.

Resolution 51/4. Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region

24. The Commission welcomed the Manila Declaration on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, and endorsed the Agenda for Action annexed to the Manila Declaration. It urged members and associate members to take early and effective action to implement those Declarations and called upon donor countries, funding agencies, United Nations and other bodies concerned to provide new and innovative financial support for such implementation. It requested the

secretariat to provide continuing assistance, including convening a regional ministerial meeting in 1997, and to report to the Committee on Poverty Alleviation through Economic Growth and Social Development in 1996 and to the Commission in 2000 on progress made in the implementation of the Agenda for Action.

Resolution 51/5. Asia-Pacific International Trade Fairs (ASPAT)

25. Recalling the success of past Asia-Pacific International Trade Fairs and recognizing the importance of such fairs in strengthening regional economic cooperation, the Commission requested its members and associate members to participate actively in ASPAT '96, requested the secretariat to extend all possible support to that and subsequent fairs and requested assistance from UNDP and other donors.

Resolution 51/6. Implementation of the Delhi Declaration on Strengthening Regional Economic Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific towards the Twenty-first Century

26. The Commission welcomed the establishment of the World Trade Organization, which was expected to contribute to the strengthening of a rule-based open multilateral trading system. It also welcomed the major recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on the Follow-up to the Implementation of the Delhi Declaration, and recommended that the feasibility of establishing a regional export credit guarantee facility and other regional networks and mechanisms, on a self-financing basis, be examined. It recommended that the secretariat assume a leading role in assisting countries to take advantage of emerging information and communications technologies. It invited subregional organizations and institutions to cooperate in implementing the resolution, requested donor Governments and multilateral agencies to provide support for the implementation of the important resolution and requested the secretariat to report to it at its fifty-second session on the implementation of the resolution.

Resolution 51/7. Implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific

27. The Commission welcomed the adoption of the Jakarta Declaration by the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development, held in June 1994, and endorsed the Plan of Action. It urged its members and associate members to enhance their national capability to implement the Declaration and Plan of Action and urged donor countries and agencies to assist them in doing so. It requested the secretariat to provide support to national efforts by, among other things, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience, mobilizing resources and expertise, conducting a regional review of progress achieved and obstacles encountered and establishing an inter-agency task force to promote intersectoral participation and ensure coordination of activities. It further requested the secretariat to report to it on the implementation of

the Declaration and Plan of Action at its fifty-second session and biennially thereafter.

Resolution 51/8. Implementation of the New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific

28. Recognizing the critical need for the provision of adequate infrastructure for economic and social development, the catalytic role that could be played by international, regional and specialized lending agencies, the magnitude of investments required and the need to expand private sector participation, the Commission adopted the New Delhi Action Plan, 1997-2006. It decided to convene a ministerial conference in 1996 to launch the Action Plan as well as to review phase II of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific. It invited members and associate members to initiate the necessary action to implement the Action Plan and invited the lending agencies to cooperate and coordinate with the secretariat in its implementation and to provide equity financing and loans. The Commission requested the Committee on Transport and Communications to review that Committee's terms of reference including its name, with regard to infrastructure facilities and services and tourism, and to review project profiles with a view to developing a regional action programme for implementation. It requested financial and technical support from concerned donors and agencies. It requested the secretariat to take the necessary steps to support implementation and to report annually to it until the last year of the Action Plan.

Resolution 51/9. Mid-term review at the regional level of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s

29. The Commission expressed its deep concern about the slow progress in attaining the objectives set out in the Programme of Action and reaffirmed that effective implementation of national policies by the least developed countries would be required, as well as a strong and committed partnership between those countries and their development partners. It endorsed the recommendations made by its Special Body on Least Developed and Land-locked Developing Countries at the Body's second session, urged all parties to undertake the necessary preparations for the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review of the Programme of Action and requested the secretariat to report to it at its fifty-second session.

Resolution 51/10. Regional cooperation for the eradication of the demand for drugs subject to abuse and related problems

30. The Commission expressed its concern about the rapid spread and increasing severity of drug abuse and related problems. It urged its members and associate members to accord priority to reduction of demand for drugs subject to abuse and invited those that had not already done so to establish national focal points on

demand aspects of drug abuse control, with the requisite mandates and resources. It further urged its members and associate members to promote treatment and rehabilitation for drug abusers. It called upon the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, other United Nations bodies and agencies and the non-governmental organizations concerned to work together to reduce the demand for drugs. It requested the secretariat to undertake a number of supportive activities, including continued promotion of the regional network of national focal points on demand aspects of drug abuse control, and to report to it at its fifty-second session on the implementation of the resolution.

Resolution 51/11. Regional cooperation on space applications for environment and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

31. The Commission endorsed the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in September 1994, the Beijing Declaration on Space Technology Applications for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, the Strategy for Regional Cooperation in Space Technology Applications for Sustainable Development, and the Action Plan on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, and called for their early implementation. It urged its members and associate members to participate actively in the Regional Space Applications Programme. It recommended that the Intergovernmental Consultative Committee on the Regional Remote Sensing Programme reconstitute itself as the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Consultative Committee on the Regional Space Applications Programme, under the purview of the Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. It invited concerned United Nations bodies and donor agencies and countries to provide technical and financial support. It requested the secretariat to undertake the required supporting activities and to report to it at its fifty-third session.

Resolution 51/12. Strengthening of the Regional Network of Research and Training Centres on Desertification Control in Asia and the Pacific

32. The Commission expressed its concern about the magnitude of land degradation and desertification in the region and noted the economic and social consequences for the affected countries. It reaffirmed its commitment to the provisions of the International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and urged those members and associate members that had not yet done so to become signatories. It urged UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to continue their strong support to and cooperation with ESCAP in implementation of the Convention. It urged members of the Regional Network to provide further support for its strengthening and welcomed the provisions made by the host Government for the Programme Office for the Regional Network in Tehran. It requested the secretariat to convene a high-level meeting of the Regional Network, in collaboration with UNEP, to continue to provide the necessary advisory services and to report to it at its fifty-second session.

Other decisions adopted by ESCAP at its fifty-first session

33. The Commission endorsed the draft programme of work for the biennium 1996-1997, which took into account the resolutions and decisions related to the work of the Commission that were adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session and the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1994, and aimed at achieving the objectives set out in the revised medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997.

34. The Commission welcomed the secretariat's initiatives in strengthening interorganizational cooperation and coordination, including the establishment of the Regional Inter-Agency Committee on Asia and the Pacific, as well as the continuing efforts to strengthen collaboration among and between subregional organizations. The Commission observed that such cooperation should lead to intensified programme coordination and the promotion of joint activities.

3. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

35. The sessions of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean are held biennially; no session was held during the period under review.

36. The most important activities of the Commission during the period were the sixth session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mar del Plata, Argentina from 25 to 29 September 1994; the third Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of Urban Development and Housing in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Quito, Ecuador from 16 to 18 November 1994; and the Caribbean subregional preparatory meeting for the World Summit for Social Development, held in St. Johns, Antigua and Barbuda from 6 to 8 December 1994.

37. The Commission also planned to hold a meeting of the Central American Economic Cooperation Committee in San José, Costa Rica during the first half of 1995 and the sixteenth session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee in Antigua, Guatemala in November 1995.

38. The sixth session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean was convened by ECLAC pursuant to the mandate contained in Commission resolution 537 (XXV), adopted in April 1994.

39. The Conference served as the regional preparatory meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in September 1995, and adopted the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001, and a resolution on observer status for associate members of regional commissions in future world conferences convened by the United Nations.

40. The objectives of the third Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of Urban Development and Housing in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Quito, Ecuador in November 1994, included (a) supporting the

establishment of consultation processes for the formulation of housing and urban development strategies; (b) supporting the preparation of national reports on housing and urban development for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), including (i) evaluation; (ii) national plan of action; (iii) national reviews; and (iv) technical assistance possibilities; and (c) identifying and developing proposals on important subject areas for the region, to be included in the regional reports as feedback to the global plan of action and the sectoral regional coordinating mechanisms.

41. The objectives of the Caribbean subregional preparatory meeting for the World Summit for Social Development were to publicize the goals and objectives of the Summit in the region, to focus the attention of policy makers and other social actors on the pressing issues of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration in the Caribbean countries and to provide policy guidance on how to resolve those issues.

42. The Central American Cooperation Committee meeting to be held in San José, Costa Rica in the first half of 1995 is to serve as a forum for the ministries of economy of Central America to analyse the situation of the Central American and Mexican economies and the process of regional integration in the light of the recent changes in the international economy and the international negotiations in which Central American countries are involved.

4. Economic Commission for Africa

43. The Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning of ECA adopted the resolutions and declaration summarized below.

Resolution 794 (XXX). Implementation of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community: harmonization, rationalization and strengthening of regional economic communities

44. The Conference of Ministers considered the report on the implementation of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community and called upon member States and regional and subregional economic communities to initiate a programme of rationalization and harmonization of trade liberalization policies in each subregional space through the progressive unification of trade rules. It also called upon the Executive Secretary, the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity and the President of the African Development Bank to provide all possible support, including the commissioning of required studies, to the subregional economic communities in the planning, formulation and implementation of their rationalization programmes and the establishment of indigenous resource mobilization mechanisms for financing integration. The Conference of Ministers further called upon UNDP and other donor agencies to provide assistance for the financing of studies and activities that needed to be conducted in the implementation of the programme.

Resolution 795 (XXX). Building Africa's information highway

45. Cognizant of the need to promote cooperation in the exchange of information in support of the African Economic Community and development efforts at the national, subregional and regional levels, the Conference of Ministers recognized the need for African countries to develop information networks for full Internet connectivity to enable them to have the same access to information that the rest of the world currently enjoyed. It expressed appreciation of the joint effort of ECA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the International Development Research Centre in organizing the first African Regional Symposium on Telematics for Development (Addis Ababa, April 1995). The Conference of Ministers noted with satisfaction the performance of the ECA programme activities on information systems development in the delivery of technical assistance to member States. It further noted with satisfaction the assistance of the International Development Research Centre and other donors in promoting the Information Age in Africa. The Conference of Ministers called upon member States to promote the exchange of experiences, with a view to assisting each other in speedily establishing their national information networks, and requested the Executive Secretary to set up a high-level working group on information technologies and communications in Africa, to mobilize the financial resources necessary for the operations of such a working group and to report on the implementation of the resolution to the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers.

Resolution 796 (XXX). Technical cooperation among developing countries

46. Having deliberated at length on issues relating to the need for capacity-building and utilization in Africa, the Conference of Ministers decided to include the issue of technical cooperation among African countries in the agenda of its next meeting and requested the Executive Secretary, in cooperation with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity and the President of the African Development Bank, as well as the chief executives of the regional economic communities, to conduct a study on technical cooperation among African countries and to report to the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers.

Resolution 797 (XXX). Accelerated implementation of the Programme of Action in the African least developed countries during the second half of the 1990s

47. Deeply concerned at the continuing deterioration in the socio-economic situation of the African least developed countries, the Conference of Ministers reaffirmed that the least developed countries had the primary responsibility for the formulation and effective implementation of national policies and priorities for their growth and development, and requested the Executive Secretary to intensify his efforts in regional coordination with respect to international and regionally focused programmes and special measures in favour of the least developed and land-locked countries, to follow up and monitor the implementation

of the Paris Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. The Conference of Ministers further requested the Executive Secretary to transmit the Commission's document evaluating the progress achieved by the African least developed countries in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the Special Memorandum on the Mid-term Global Review to the permanent representatives of African States to the United Nations at Geneva and in New York through the Chairpersons of the African Groups and the Chairman of the Group of 77, as Africa's contribution to the global review process and to report on the implementation of the resolution to the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers.

Resolution 798 (XXX). Promotion of private investment in Africa

48. Conscious of the importance of private investment to the growth and development of African countries, the Conference of Ministers noted with satisfaction the commitment of African countries to carrying out the necessary reforms, adopting appropriate policies and creating the institutional framework and machinery that would attract private investment. It invited Africa's development partners to extend all the necessary support for improving investment conditions for both domestic and foreign investors, for implementing comprehensive debt-relief programmes and for the efforts of African countries to improve and enhance their financial intermediation capabilities and participate actively in the promotional activities of African countries. The Conference of Ministers requested the Executive Secretary, the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the President of the African Development Bank and the World Bank to provide African countries with the technical and financial assistance they needed to promote the private sector.

49. African countries and development partners were invited to attend and participate in the regional forum on private investment in Africa, to be held in Accra, Ghana in November 1995.

Resolution 799 (XXX). Promoting human development in Africa

50. Aware of the primacy of the human being in the development process and of the need to focus the development endeavours of Africa on human development, and deeply concerned about the persistent and deplorable human development situation prevailing on the continent, the Conference of Ministers commended the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa for its initiative in launching the series of reports on human development in Africa. It urged member States and Africa's development partners to support this initiative fully and to make use of the reports. The Conference of Ministers requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report every two years to the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Human Development and its Follow-up Committee of Fifteen.

Resolution 800 (XXX). Strategy and Action Plan for Water Resources Assessment, Development and Management in Africa

51. Recognizing the frequent occurrence of drought in Africa and the negative effects of drought on food production and availability of water, and aware that water resources assessment and development contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of Africa in general and to agricultural development in particular, the Conference of Ministers highly appreciated the existing cooperation and collaboration between the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and ECA. It urged member States to adopt the Strategy and Action Plan and use it in implementing their programmes of water resources assessment, development and management and also urged them to initiate actions to develop and strengthen management and technical capabilities. The Conference of Ministers called upon Africa's development partners to incorporate the Strategy and Action Plan in their programmes of assistance for water resources assessment and to promote the Strategy and Action Plan. It requested ECA to cooperate with WMO in its support for African countries.

Resolution 801 (XXX). Food security and self-sufficiency in Africa

52. The Conference of Ministers considered the report on the situation of food and agricultural production, especially in the context of food security and self-sufficiency in Africa. It was deeply concerned at the continuing deterioration of the situation of food and agriculture in Africa over the past 20 years. Convinced of the need to ensure that the food requirements of the region were met through the implementation of concrete policies, the Conference of Ministers called upon member States to create a conducive macroeconomic environment, including the design of effective and appropriate policy interventions that went beyond the agricultural sector for the enhancement of all required capacities for food and agricultural production. It urged the regional economic communities to build a framework for cooperation that aimed at developing subregional and regional trade. The Conference of Ministers also called upon the Executive Secretary, in cooperation with the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other appropriate United Nations organizations to evolve a comprehensive strategy that sought viable economic development. It appealed to the international community to adopt the measures to cushion the adverse impact on Africa of the liberalization of agriculture prices under the Final Act of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, and requested the Executive Secretary to report on the implementation of the resolution to the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers.

Resolution 802 (XXX). African Platform for Action: African common position for the advancement of women

53. The Conference of Ministers noted with satisfaction the declaration contained in the African Platform for Action, which reaffirmed the commitment of African Governments to the realization of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women through accelerated action for equality, development and peace.

54. It adopted the African Platform for Action as a renewed commitment and urged member States to give full support to the implementation of the provisions of the African Platform for Action.

55. The Conference of Ministers called upon the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity to adopt the African Platform for Action at its next meeting by according the necessary political support, and requested the subregional economic communities to contribute to sensitizing member countries in their subregions and to coordinate their efforts for the implementation of the African Platform for Action.

Resolution 803 (XXX). Resource mobilization for the implementation of the African Platform for Action

56. Noting with concern the low degree to which such global and regional frameworks as the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and the Abuja Declaration had been implemented, taking into account the outcome of the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women held in Dakar, Senegal from 16 to 23 November 1994 and aware of the serious financial difficulties facing African States, which could prevent African women from participating effectively in the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Conference of Ministers noted with satisfaction the efforts made by the African Centre for Women in drafting the African Platform for Action and in preparations for Africa's participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women. It urged member States to make adequate financial appropriations in their national budgets, giving priority to women in development programmes. The Conference of Ministers requested ECA, OAU and the African Development Bank to mobilize financial resources for the implementation of the African Platform for Action. It further requested Africa's development partners to assist African countries financially and technically for their effective participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Resolution 805 (XXX). Food security in North Africa

57. The Conference of Ministers endorsed the resolution adopted by the Multinational Programming and Operational Centre for North Africa concerning food security in North Africa. The Conference of Ministers requested the Executive Secretary to conduct an assessment of the food intake requirements of the people in the subregion and to organize a regional seminar on the management and exploitation of migratory fish stocks. It further requested the Executive

Secretary to conduct a study on the impact of the Uruguay Round agreement on agriculture, on the imports and exports of agricultural products of the countries of the North African subregion, and appealed to the international community to provide the necessary technical and financial assistance in that respect.

Resolution 806 (XXX). United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

58. The Conference of Ministers acknowledged with satisfaction the activities so far undertaken by the Institute towards the fulfilment of its mandate under the overall guidance of its Governing Board. It urged Governments of the region that had not yet acceded to the Statute of the Institute to do so as a matter of priority in order to broaden the Institute's support base in the region, and endorsed the recommendations of the Governing Board that the chairmanship of the Board should be held by member States on a two-year rotational basis from among the members of the Governing Board.

Resolution 808 (XXX). Strengthening of the operational capacity of the Economic Commission for Africa: United Nations Trust Fund for African Development

59. Aware of the importance of extrabudgetary resources in general and the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development in particular in financing the Commission's operational activities in the African region, and concerned about the continuous decreases in pledged contributions, due largely to the socio-economic crisis affecting most African countries, the Conference of Ministers expressed its appreciation to countries that had pledged and fully paid their contributions to the Fund. It invited African countries and institutions and multilateral and bilateral donors to continue their support for the Fund. The Conference of Ministers reaffirmed the need for coordination and harmonization of the activities of pledging conferences at United Nations Headquarters and at ECA headquarters in order to avoid duplication of effort. It requested the Executive Secretary to review the operations of the Fund and make proposals for strengthening them. It further requested the Executive Secretary to take all necessary steps to implement the resolution and to report thereon to the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers.

Declaration on Africa's external debt

60. The African Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning adopted the following Declaration on Africa's external debt:

"1. We, the African Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning, meeting in Addis Ababa, during the thirtieth session of the Commission/twenty-first meeting of the Conference of Ministers from 1 to 4 May 1995, and acting on behalf of our governments and

people, within the spirit of the charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, have, once more, examined the external debt problem of our continent in light of the theme of the session, i.e., promoting accelerated growth and sustainable development in Africa through the building of critical capacities.

"2. We recall the Declaration on debt adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its thirtieth session held in June 1994 in Tunis, Tunisia, as well as the initiatives of the Non-Aligned Movement submitted to the Seven Most Industrialized Countries (G7) at their 1994 summit in Naples.

"3. We remain preoccupied by the continent's increasing debt burden which totalled 313 billion dollars in 1994 and accounts, to date, for 231.3 per cent of Africa's exports and 71.6 per cent, on the average, of the total GDP of the continent.

"4. We feel that the African debt crisis is partly due to an international financial crisis and that it is not therefore a temporary liquidity crisis and cannot be resolved through debt rescheduling agreements only. The African debt crisis has been further compounded by the worsening terms of trade for several of our major export commodities.

"5. We have examined the various initiatives taken by the international community to reduce Africa's debt burden and noted the poor results obtained following the application of those initiatives. The impact on structural economic imbalances and the solvency crisis besetting our countries is very limited and fails to address permanently the continent's external debt problem.

"6. We reaffirm our commitment to the pursuit of economic reforms and request that our efforts should be met with substantial debt forgiveness and an increase in concessional flows so as to boost public investment in infrastructure and human resources and help attract more private investment.

"7. We note that most of the initiatives taken to reduce the external debt of our countries focused on bilateral debt. The results obtained have been mixed and partly offset by the effects of commercial and multilateral debt. Savings from bilateral debt servicing have, indeed, been rapidly absorbed by multilateral and commercial debt servicing.

"8. We express our appreciation to the Group of Seven Most Industrialized Countries for the Toronto Initiatives and the Naples Terms whose impact on our external debt, however, falls below our legitimate expectations both in terms of the stock of debt involved and the countries eligible.

"9. We note with appreciation the Naples Terms and appeal to the international community to improve them in order to:

"(a) Cater for an 80 per cent reduction in the total non-concessional debt of all African countries including accumulated interest;

"(b) Allow for the cancellation of concessional debts rescheduled in the Paris Club;

"(c) Institute innovative measures that would reduce:

"(i) multilateral debts including the buy-back of this category of debt with proceeds from the sale of a part of the gold reserves of the International Monetary Fund;

"(ii) commercial debt through improved Brady Plan mechanisms and the enhanced IDA Debt Reduction Facility.

"10. We are aware that finding a lasting solution to the external debt problem of our countries would require, among other things:

"(a) The pursuit of economic reforms likely to create an enabling environment for domestic and foreign investments and the reduction of the adverse effects of the external environment; and

"(b) The forging of effective partnerships with bilateral creditors and multilateral institutions from which we request an increase in the flow of concessional resources, especially during the period of our economic restructuring.

"11. We are of the opinion that the solution to debt problems should go hand-in-hand with investment and trade flows and that, in this respect, the conversion of debt for the financing of development programmes, such as entrepreneurship promotion, should be encouraged.

"12. We propose that the mandate and terms of reference of the Paris Club should be expanded to include the holding forthwith of negotiations between our countries and their bilateral creditors and the multilateral financial institutions for coordinated action in order to find a positive solution to the African debt problem in all its bilateral, multilateral and private aspects, within the global framework for securing positive resource flows to Africa.

Done at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
3 May 1995"

5. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Resolution 206 (XVIII). Programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1996-1997

61. Recalling the second revision of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 and noting with appreciation that the proposed outline of the programme of work and priorities took into account the adoption of an integrated

approach in the activities of the Commission, as reflected in the proposed programme based on five thematic subprogrammes, each covering a number of interrelated sectors, the Commission approved the proposed programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1996-1997, with the proviso that the secretariat takes into account the comments made by the delegations concerning the programme.

Resolution 207 (XVIII). Facilitating the relocation of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to its permanent headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon

62. Recalling its resolution 197 (XVII) on the permanent headquarters of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in which the Commission decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council that the permanent headquarters of the Commission be relocated in Beirut, referring to Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/43 on the permanent headquarters of ESCWA, taking note of the various details of this matter contained in the report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission (see E/ESCWA/C.1/18/5/Add.1/Rev.1) and taking into consideration the efforts of the Government of Lebanon to effect the transfer of the Commission to its permanent headquarters, the Commission called on its member States to take measures to support the Secretary-General in his efforts to secure the necessary resources for the implementation of Commission resolution 197 (XVII) and to facilitate his task in that regard.

Resolution 208 (XVIII). Representation of member States in the Advisory Committee established pursuant to ESCWA resolution 175 (XV) on strengthening the role and performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

63. Taking into account the recommendation of the Advisory Committee of 3 May 1995, the Commission decided to amend paragraph 1 (a) of its resolution 175 (XV) on strengthening the role and performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in order to invite member States to set up an advisory body comprising the heads of their diplomatic missions in the host country or persons delegated by their Governments, and a representative of the host country to assist the Executive Secretary in the study of problems connected with the work of the Commission.

II. WORK OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

A. Economic Commission for Europe

64. The rapid pace of political, economic and social change has continued within the ECE region during the past year and poses challenges to all Governments and international institutions, including ECE. These changes are viewed not as discouraging constraints but as a challenge to reinforce

solidarity, develop partnership and promote peace and security, which would contribute to the stability and economic development of the region as a whole. The Governments of the region have reaffirmed their support for the role of the Commission as an efficient instrument for developing cooperation in the ECE region by virtue of its universal membership and its treatment of all States on an equal footing.

65. Important changes in the scope and structure of regional cooperation have also taken place in the course of the year. The European Union has been enlarged to comprise 15 member States. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has succeeded the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The World Trade Organization has come into being, succeeding the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

66. At the same time conflicts in the region have persisted, despite the efforts of the international community to restore peace and stability, which threaten the transition process itself. Emphasizing the paramount importance they attach to securing peace and stability in the ECE region, Governments have expressed the hope that a political solution can be found to the various conflicts in the region.

67. The European Union cited as its priorities during the past year four principal objectives: to facilitate growth and employment, to promote security and stability in Europe, to make the assistance of Europe visible not only through its economic influence but also through the defence of the cultural diversity of the continent and finally, from the perspective of an enlarged Union, to accept countries of central and eastern Europe as new members, which would entail institutional reform.

68. In general the past year has not been an easy one. Although economic recovery occurred in some parts of the region, notably in the industrialized countries, that was not the case for all countries, particularly some of the countries in transition. A degree of stability is now evident in a number of transition economies, especially those of central Europe; however, those that began the transition process more recently are still experiencing considerable difficulties. These include policy problems pertaining to their transition to market-oriented economies, as well as legislative, economic and restructuring measures which they have taken to pursue the reform process further. Other Governments have experienced difficulties in overcoming macroeconomic imbalances and in making progress in structural reforms, including institution-building. Given persistent obstacles and drawbacks, their need for investment, project financing and improved market access are of paramount importance. Western financial and technical assistance in supporting the reform process has an important role to play in this regard. None the less these countries are determined to pursue market-oriented reforms, aimed at their full integration into the European economic structures and in the world economy. Some Governments attach great importance to gaining improved access to international markets for their commodities as an important factor for the success of their ongoing economic reforms. The efforts of these countries to undertake the necessary reforms is seen as a prerequisite to bringing them closer to the European Union's "acquis communautaire".

69. External factors, such as natural ecological disasters and transportation blockades, have in some cases hindered economic development. The observance of the United Nations embargo on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) has had a negative impact on certain economies. The continuing severe environmental, social and health consequences of the Chernobyl accident have also persisted and continue to require technical and financial assistance from the international community.

70. An important feature of the region has been the expanding integration processes where economic cooperation and free-trade agreements among countries have been concluded.

71. Various initiatives have also been taken during 1994 to foster cooperation in the Mediterranean region among European, North African and Middle Eastern countries. These include the Europe-Mediterranean Partnership, initiated by the Commission of the European Communities and leading to the Euro-Mediterranean Conference to be held in November 1995 in Barcelona, as well as the Casablanca Declaration of November 1994 and the follow-up Summit to be held in Amman, Jordan in November 1995.

72. One important new feature of the integration process is the series of European Union agreements with the countries of central Europe, the Russian Federation and the newly independent States. Agreements are now in force with six central European countries and negotiations are taking place, aimed at the establishment of bilateral association agreements between each country. Considerable progress has already been made in the establishment of free trade with the six countries. Since January 1995, practically all remaining import duties and quantitative restrictions on industrial imports from the associated countries have been abolished and the European Union has become the principal commercial partner of the associated countries. Partnership and cooperation agreements are being negotiated with countries members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, with some already concluded, based on most-favoured-nation treatment. At the same time the coordinated assistance effort of the Group of 24, for which the European Commission is the coordinating agency, has made 74.7 billion ECU available to the countries of central and eastern Europe since 1990. In addition, the European Union has made considerable funds available to the Commonwealth of Independent States through the TACIS programme of technical assistance.

73. The assistance programme of the United States of America entitled "Support for Eastern European Democracies" (SEED) and the Freedom Support Act have provided substantial assistance to the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union. In addition to direct assistance, a key element of these programmes is the building of a lasting commercial relationship with these countries, including extending the generalized system of preferences programme to most of the newly independent States.

74. Considerable attention has been given to ways and means of promoting the expansion of trade in transition economies. Governments have stressed the importance of dealing with all the constraints, both internal and external. The extension of preferential trade by western Europe to eastern European countries is seen as a great benefit in assisting export performance. Attracting foreign

direct investment (FDI) is also a key to stimulating trade and ensuring effective economic restructuring. Policy makers must address existing weaknesses in legislation and improve the consistency of regulations if FDI is to become a significant instrument of restructuring and a catalyst for trade. Obstacles to trade and the susceptibility of exports to tariff and non-tariff measures, particularly in the agricultural sector, continue to impede market access.

75. It is recognized that assistance to countries in transition is one of the major orientations of the Commission's work. Governments continue to support the diversified programme of ECE to this end, which has included seminars and workshops and the introduction of the Regional Advisory Services Programme. A number of Governments are of the opinion that the Commission should further diversify the forms and methods of its activities in the field of assistance to countries in transition and expand the scope of its assistance by devoting more attention to the newly independent States in which the reform processes have not yet gathered momentum.

76. A key aspect of environmental cooperation within the framework of ECE has been the continuing development of international environmental law, which was further strengthened with the signing of the new sulphur protocol in Oslo, in June 1994. Work on the protocol on persistent organic pollutants and the control of emissions of heavy metals is also seen as important. Those countries that have not yet ratified the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context are encouraged to do so as soon as possible.

77. Preparations for the Conference for Environment Ministers to be held in Sofia in October 1995 have made considerable progress. One important theme for the Conference is the strengthening of financial mechanisms for promoting environmental investments in central and eastern Europe. The Environmental Programme for Europe will also be an important item of the agenda. One chapter of the Programme deals with sustainable consumption and production patterns in response to Agenda 21. Governments also attach importance to the environmental performance reviews.

78. Governments of the region attach vital importance to transport development in the context of current economic and social changes, especially infrastructure development and regulatory work. Emphasis is placed on the development of integrated pan-European transport systems and the Trans-European Motorway (TEM) and the Trans-European Railway (TER) projects; on traffic safety information to young drivers and road users, with particular mention of the Second European Road Traffic Week held in March 1995, and the need for a coordinated international effort with respect to the development of electronic information systems installed in vehicles. Considerable progress has been made in the preparations for the ECE Conference on Transport and the Environment in 1996.

79. ECE work on trade facilitation, notably the continuing development and global extension of UN/EDIFACT, enjoys strong support. There is, however, concern about the possible delay in the introduction of the EDIFACT system in the countries with economics in transition. The review of ECE work in this area - the "re-engineering" exercise - undertaken by the Working Party on the Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, has attracted great interest and

is expected to ensure that the momentum of this work will be maintained and will serve to recognize the efforts of those working on UN/EDIFACT world wide.

80. Governments continue to stress the importance of maintaining close cooperation in the economic sphere between ECE and OSCE in order to put into practice the economic dimension of the all-European security system and to make full use of ECE potential and expertise. They stress the need to achieve complementarity and an effective division of labour between the two organizations. ECE cooperation with other international organizations and institutions active in the region is also given importance by ECE member Governments.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Major developments

81. The average economic growth rate of the developing countries of the ESCAP region accelerated slightly in 1994, to reach 7.7 per cent of gross domestic product, compared with a 7.2 per cent growth rate in 1993; this was more than three times the growth rate of the world economy as a whole. The developing countries of the ESCAP region accounted for 9 per cent of world economic product during the period 1991-1994, and 15 per cent of world exports for the same period originated in those countries. The region has also been attracting an increasing share of world investment funds, accounting for 68 per cent of developing country inflows of foreign direct investment in 1994.

82. Growth of a similar magnitude is projected for the remainder of the decade, supported by the continued momentum of economic reforms in most of the countries of the region, with a strong emphasis on deregulation of the public sector, reduction of government intervention in price determination, enlargement of areas for private enterprise by privatization or corporatization, reduction of subsidies linked to production, elimination of distortive effects of government procurement, liberalization of the trade sector and reinforcement of an outward orientation. The region is experiencing a sustained increase in domestic savings and investment, as well as strong growth in domestic demand fuelled by an expanding number of well-off consumers.

Work of the secretariat

Regional economic cooperation

83. A significant part of the work programme under this theme is related to implementation of the Action Programme for Regional Economic Cooperation in Trade and Investment and the Delhi Declaration on Strengthening Regional Economic Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific towards the Twenty-first Century. The annual Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific was prepared, and major studies reviewed the patterns and prospects for intraregional trade at disaggregated levels and sectoral flows of foreign direct investment. The New Delhi Action Plan for Infrastructure Development also received special attention, as did issues relating to the disadvantaged economies in transition,

the role of subregional growth zones in promoting regional economic cooperation and relocation of industries and industrial complementarity.

84. The second Consultative Meeting between Executive Heads of Subregional Organizations and ESCAP was held in January 1995, during which modalities for intersubregional cooperation in trade and investment, transport and communications, human resources development and energy were discussed.

85. Regarding development research and policy, efforts were focused on macroeconomic management and economic reforms; tax system reforms with special reference to income distribution and poverty; and growth experience in East and South-East Asia. In the field of international trade, work related to the outcome of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations and the establishment of the World Trade Organization; the implications of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for the Asian and Pacific region; intraregional trade and investment; accession to the Bangkok Agreement; trade facilitation and trade efficiency; establishing a network of trade-related research institutions; and trade promotion activities. In the area of industry and technology, activities focused on sustainable industrial development and restructuring in follow-up of the Seoul Plan of Action for Promoting Industrial Restructuring in Asia and the Pacific and the Tehran Declaration on Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Technology-led Industrialization in Asia and the Pacific.

Environment and sustainable development

86. The Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Development in Asia and the Pacific adopted the Beijing Declaration on Space Technology Applications for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, with its strategy for regional cooperation and action plan, on 24 September 1994. The Declaration recognized that space technology applications were of immense benefit to natural resources management, environmental monitoring, development planning, education and human resource development in both developed and developing countries, and agreed that members and associate members of ESCAP should integrate space technology and applications into their development planning processes.

87. Secretariat efforts continued to be directed towards implementation of Agenda 21 by, among other things, developing analytical and operational modalities for integrating sustainable development considerations into macroeconomic decision-making and management, and increasing awareness of and capabilities to solve problems related to energy-environment linkages and growth in energy demand, natural resources accounting, integrated coastal zone management, ecotourism and prevention of desertification. Policy formulation for environmental management of mineral resources exploitation and handling of wastes continued. Activities to encourage the integration of geoscience data into land-use and urban planning and to improve flood forecasting and flood warning systems formed part of the efforts to reduce the impact of natural disasters in the region. Preparations were made for the ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, to be convened in November 1995.

Poverty alleviation through economic growth and social development

88. The Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development adopted the Manila Declaration on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region on 18 October 1994. In it, Governments identified specific time-bound goals and targets for poverty alleviation, employment expansion and social integration. They committed themselves to eradicating absolute poverty from the region by 2010, and to working towards the reduction of relative poverty. They agreed on targets for, among other things, reducing maternal, infant and child deaths and increasing life expectancy and for increasing literacy and decreasing the disparities between educational opportunities of boys and girls. The Manila Declaration formed the main input of ESCAP to the World Summit for Social Development.

89. The Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development adopted the Jakarta Declaration for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific on 14 June 1994. The participants committed themselves to goals, strategic objectives and actions to, among other things, eradicate poverty and counteract the feminization of poverty; promote equality in women's access to and participation in economic activities; recognize women's role and concerns in environment and natural resource management; support their equal access to power and decision-making processes, and to education and literacy; protect and promote their human rights; ensure that their health needs are adequately articulated and properly met; and enhance their role in peace-building. The Jakarta Declaration will serve as the major regional input to the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in September 1995.

Transport and communications

90. The secretariat continued its preparation of an action plan on infrastructure development, with emphasis on increasing the productivity of the current infrastructure through improvements in management and maintenance, as well as further expansion to support continuing economic growth and cooperation within the region.

91. It also continued implementation of the integrated project on Asian land transport infrastructure development (ALTID), giving special attention to the pressing needs of its newest members, the land-locked central Asian republics, and organized a seminar on the implications of accession to land transport facilitation conventions for members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation (ECO). It gave further assistance to South-East Asian countries in designing their sectors of the Trans-Asian Railway network and determining route standards and requirements, as well as promoting rail transport facilitation measures. It also continued work in such areas as development of multimodal transport, identification of non-physical constraints to the efficient and cost-effective movement of goods, commercialization and privatization of ports, and use of compressed natural gas as an environmentally friendly fuel for city buses.

92. ESCAP also continued to assist members and associate members in deriving greater socioeconomic benefits from the planned and systematic development of tourism.

Statistics

93. Activities to support the development of national statistical capabilities continued. Representatives of the United Nations and the Government of Japan signed the host country agreement for the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on 14 April 1995. The Institute will continue to provide training in the gathering, processing and appropriate packaging of timely and accurate statistics to support the national development programmes of members and associate members of ESCAP. The secretariat provided training and advisory services on adopting the new system of national accounts, gender statistics, and environmental and resource accounting.

94. ESCAP also continued work on its Statistical Information System (ESIS), which will initially improve access to and handling of statistical information within the secretariat and later serve as an additional resource for members and associate members throughout the region.

Least developed and land-locked developing countries

95. Six of the new members that joined ESCAP over the past three years are land-locked; they and two other land-locked member countries are in the midst of the difficult transition from centralized economic planning systems. Work under this subprogramme has focused on supporting the implementation of ongoing economic reforms of land-locked and of the least developed countries directed towards improving macroeconomic management, relaxing direct controls, enhancing domestic resource mobilization, promoting private sector development, reforming public enterprises, increasing the inflows of foreign investment and technology, and instituting more effective measures to address social issues, particularly with regard to alleviating poverty, human resource development and protection of the environment.

96. The Special Body on Least Developed and Land-locked Developing Countries at its second session, in April 1995, made a number of recommendations for strengthening the regional input to the Mid-term Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s; the recommendations related to national issues and policy initiatives as well as to external support dimensions.

Pacific island developing countries

97. Secretariat activities in support of the Pacific island developing countries continued to be focused on providing analysis, technical assistance and advisory services on critical areas affecting their development. The ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre was strengthened, with eight advisers currently providing services in such areas as development planning and policy, international trade, statistics, port and harbour development and women in development.

98. Technical assistance was also provided directly from ESCAP headquarters. Among other activities, an expert group meeting on economic performance and prospects, held in Vanuatu in July 1994, discussed a range of topics concerned with official development assistance, the role of government, the economic

problems of Micronesia and countering the activities of "get-rich operators", as well as the possible establishment of a Pacific Islands Development Bank.

99. The Special Body on Pacific Island Countries held its third session, in April 1995. Topics under consideration included enhancing external trade and investment in Pacific island countries, in particular with Asia, and the implications for Pacific island countries of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

C. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

100. The activities carried out under the programme of work of the ECLAC system, which includes the secretariat of ECLAC, the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) and the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), focused on the evaluation of the strategies of adjustment, stabilization and structural reforms pursued by the region.

101. ECLAC continued to provide inputs to member Governments on relevant issues, including reform of the public sector and decentralization experiences in countries of the region; reform of the financial markets; the nature of innovation and its application to the production sector; and the trade liberalization process in the region.

102. The organization continued to perform its established role of monitoring the economic and social evolution of the region. To the well-known list of annual publications that serve this function (the Preliminary Overview of the Economy of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean and the Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean) was added the Social Panorama of Latin America, reflecting the increasing relevance of social issues and the recognition they are gaining in the region.

103. ILPES developed a flexible, module system of recurring courses of average length. The most important of these were the International Course on the Preparation, Evaluation and Management of Local Development Projects (30 participants), the second International Course on Economic Reforms and Strategic Public Management (31 participants) and the International Course on Decentralization and Municipal Management (32 participants).

104. CELADE participated actively in preparatory activities for the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994. CELADE continued to provide assistance to Latin American and Caribbean countries in the field of population and development.

105. Special importance was attached to the issue of industrial restructuring to achieve competitiveness. Much of that effort was channelled through the ECLAC/UNDP project on the design of policies to strengthen technological innovation capacity and enhance international competitiveness in the Latin American entrepreneurial environment.

106. In the field of trade, activities focused on the expansion and intensification of commercial and economic relations between Latin America and Eastern European countries. Five documents were published analysing economic relations between Latin America and the Russian Federation. These documents were discussed at a seminar held in Santiago, Chile on 22 and 23 September 1994.

107. Under the project on the formulation of policies for the transformation of agricultural production in Latin America and the Caribbean, four seminars were held during 1994 on agroindustry and its capacity for economic and social integration in Guatemala City (28 and 29 June), Santiago, Chile (3-5 August), San José (30 August-1 September) and Santo Domingo (16 November).

108. In the area of ocean resources, emphasis was given to the implementation of the recommendations of chapter 17 of Agenda 21 and their links with other chapters, such as those on biodiversity and movement of toxic and dangerous products.

109. On the issue of water, a meeting was convened of the expert group responsible for studying the possible effects of Agenda 21 on integrated water resource development and management.

110. In the field of social development, ECLAC work focused on preparatory activities for the World Summit for Social Development through the preparation of substantive documents and as the focal point of the United Nations system in the coordination of inter-agency actions.

111. Activities related to the integration of women into development focused especially on preparations for the regional conference on the subject and the completion of the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was presented and approved at the conference.

112. In relation to the regional framework of statistical information, work continued on the setting up of the Short-term Indicators Database, the incorporation of new international statistical classifications and the development of a data bank on the external debt of Latin American countries.

113. Assistance was provided to Latin American countries in implementing the new System of National Accounts. A seminar on balance-of-payment statistics, organized jointly with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (7-25 November 1994), was attended by 28 participants from 17 countries.

114. In the field of economic projections, studies focused on the external factors that influence the evolution of Latin America and the Caribbean, on updating medium- and long-term socio-economic projections for the countries of the region and on an analysis of linkages with the global economy.

115. ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico continued to consolidate the process of economic integration among the Central American countries and to support the efforts of their Governments to revive and modernize their economies through the formulation of new approaches to development in the subregion, with special emphasis on changing production patterns with greater social equity.

116. In the field of social development, priority was given to the study of the incorporation of women into the process of changing production patterns, the incorporation of the poorer social strata into productive activities and research on the health situation in Central America.

117. Support for the electrical integration of the Central American countries was a top priority activity during the period under review. Studies were prepared on electrical planning, petroleum supply and strengthening the Central American coordination groups.

118. The subregional headquarters for the Caribbean focused on the analysis of issues relevant to economic and social development in the Caribbean subregion, with emphasis on issues related to island developing countries. To this end, the subregional headquarters contributed to the preparatory activities for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados from 25 April to 6 May 1994.

D. Economic Commission for Africa

119. The highlights of the activities of ECA in furthering the objective of promoting socio-economic development in Africa are set out below.

120. With the entry into force in May 1994 of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, the Commission has carried out several activities in support of the implementation of the Treaty. Some of these activities were undertaken in the framework of the joint secretariat consisting of OAU, ECA and the African Development Bank. At the same time, the Commission, through its Multinational Programming and Operational Centres and Multidisciplinary Regional Advisory Group has provided technical advice to several African subregional and intergovernmental organizations in the field of economic cooperation and integration.

121. During the period under review, the Commission intensified its efforts in support of capacity-building for industrial development. Specifically, it undertook a number of operational activities, mainly through convening ad hoc or expert group meetings on the development of African metal industries based on South-South cooperation; the utilization and perspective for integrated development of natural resources for the production of phosphate, nitrogen and potassium fertilizers; the possibilities and perspectives with regard to the development of petrochemical industries in North Africa on the basis of local resources of oil and gas; and the application of nuclear science and technology for development, particularly in the field of agriculture and food preservation. Furthermore, ECA hosted the fifteenth meeting of the Joint Committee of the secretariats of OAU, ECA and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) on the implementation of the programme of the second United Nations Industrial Development Decade for Africa.

122. Activities were also undertaken to assist member States to formulate appropriate policies and programmes in the field of natural resources and energy development. Thus, ECA organized an expert group meeting on policies and strategies for the development and utilization of natural resources and energy

in Africa; participated in the workshop on institutional aspects of the energy sector in Africa, organized by the African Development Bank; provided advisory services to some member States and subregional organizations on mineral resources exploitation; and co-sponsored, with WMO, a conference entitled "Water resources: policy and assessment".

123. The Commission provided assistance, through advisory missions, to several member States in many areas of environment.

124. Activities in the field of science and technology focused on three main areas, namely, promotion of policies and institutions, human resource development and regional cooperation. Much effort was also devoted to assisting member States in the development of their information systems and information technology through training, advisory services, database development and the issuance of pertinent publications. A major event in the field of information technology during the period was the organization of an international symposium on telematics with the co-sponsorship of UNESCO and ITU. The symposium made various recommendations regarding the development and strengthening of telematics for the development of Africa.

125. The Commission organized the fifth Africa Regional Conference on Women in Dakar, in November 1994. The major outcome of the Conference was the adoption of the African Platform for Action, which constitutes Africa's input to the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in September 1995.

126. In the context of the economic empowerment of women, the Commission put forward in 1992 an initiative to establish an African bank for women. Subsequently, the Conference of Ministers requested feasibility studies on the project. In August 1994, an expert group meeting was convened to consider the modalities for establishing such a bank. The meeting recommended the establishment of a privately owned regional financial institute, to be called the African Bank for Women. Entrepreneurs from some African countries have signalled their willingness to promote the Bank.

127. The Commission has embarked on a major initiative on building and utilizing critical capacities in Africa. A preliminary report on this initiative was prepared for the twentieth meeting (1994) of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning. The Conference of Ministers welcomed the initiative and requested that detailed work be undertaken. A progress report was presented to the Conference of Ministers at its twenty-first meeting (1995). A Framework Agenda for Capacity-Building and Utilization in Africa will be finalized in the next few months.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

128. Economic and social developments in the ESCWA region during 1994 were affected by several major factors, including a decline in oil prices in the international markets, continuation of the United Nations sanctions against Iraq, the Middle East peace process and the armed conflict in Yemen.

129. The decline in oil prices precipitated a decline in oil revenues in most of the oil-exporting ESCWA member countries. This in turn had a negative effect on the balance of payments and government budgets and consequently obliged Governments to curtail planned expenditure. The continuation of the sanctions against Iraq have continued to affect economic and social development in that country. In addition, countries that traditionally had strong economic and trade relations with Iraq, such as Jordan, experienced further negative impacts of those sanctions. On the other hand, the signing of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel on 26 October 1994 has so far resulted in the restoration of water and land to Jordan and a surge in tourism. In addition, Jordan was granted some debt relief. The armed conflict during May and June of 1994 in Yemen cost that least developed country billions of dollars in damage to infrastructure, in addition to human losses; as a result, the country's socio-economic problems have become acute.

130. The ESCWA region is still characterized by a severe imbalance between high population growth and sluggish economic growth and by strong dependence on the economies of other regions for external trade. The sustained and continuing need for economic adjustment programmes further aggravates the existing pressures on all socio-economic sectors in various ESCWA countries.

131. Other challenges recently encountered by ESCWA included the effects of the Middle East peace process on the region's socio-economic and political situation. The impact of a new approach towards international and regional issues not only concerns the political environment but also affects the economic and social fabric of ESCWA countries. Multidisciplinary coverage of work programme components, combining them in a few compact areas so that ESCWA can be more articulate, operational and responsive to the new shape and requirements of the region, is the basic principle guiding the ESCWA programme planning and coordination efforts. The problem of the present high vacancy rate in staff resources, which affects programme delivery, has also been considered.

132. In response to the above situation and in order to react to the region's needs better, the ESCWA secretariat adjusted its work programme according to the restructuring exercise carried out and finalized in 1994. The new ESCWA programme structure comprises 5 thematic subprogrammes instead of the previous 15 sectoral subprogrammes. The five thematic subprogrammes are management of natural resources and environment; improvement of the quality of life; economic development and cooperation; regional development and global changes; and special programmes and issues. Based on the above approach, the ESCWA work programme for the biennium 1994-1995 has been reformulated to place more emphasis on such issues as the establishment of social and economic databases, the environment, women in development, human development and effects of the GATT agreement. Furthermore, to enhance regional cooperation, two specialized subsidiary ESCWA intergovernmental bodies were established in 1994: the Statistics Committee and the Social Development Committee.

133. The major activities undertaken by the Commission in its attempt to support the ESCWA regional development efforts and national development policies of ESCWA member countries are described below.

134. Work under the ESCWA programme on development issues and policies during 1994 included the annual survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region. The survey considered, inter alia, the impact of economic reform policies in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. In the area of international trade and development finance, the secretariat issued an analytical review of developments and issues in the external trade and payments situation of Western Asian countries. Another review addressed developments and trends in the monetary and financial sectors in the economies of the ESCWA region. This subprogramme has been designated as the ESCWA focal point for policies and measures to reduce income disparities and alleviate poverty in selected ESCWA countries.

135. The food and agriculture activities of ESCWA focused on land and water policies, the impact of international regional trade, rural development, wildlife conservation and policy analysis. ESCWA issued its annual publication Agriculture and Development in Western Asia and prepared a national farm data handbook for the Syrian Arab Republic. Other publications issued by the secretariat are as follows: Land and water policies in the Near East Region; Wildlife Conservation for Sustainable Development in Arab Countries; Assessment of Institutional Structures for Planning and Implementation of Rural Policies and Programmes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; Marketing of Agricultural Products in Lebanon; Rehabilitation of the Fishery Sector in the Gaza Strip; and Evaluation of Agricultural Policies in the Syrian Arab Republic: Policy Analysis Matrix Approach.

136. Under its industrial development activities, ESCWA published the proceedings of the expert group meeting on the creation of indigenous entrepreneurship and opportunities for small- and medium-scale industrial investments. In preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, the secretariat issued the publication Participation of Women in Manufacturing: Patterns, Determinants and Analysis. Also in 1994, ESCWA continued its regional advisory services on assistance in improving the performance and competitiveness of existing industries in ESCWA countries. Various training-of-trainers workshops on how to start a business in war-torn areas were held in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Beirut. In addition, a pilot workshop on upgrading entrepreneurial skills of managers of small and medium-sized enterprises under changing conditions was held in Amman from 14 to 20 September 1994.

137. Activities under the technology programme in 1994 included the publication of the Report on Activities in the ESCWA Region Related to the Protection of the Ozone Layer, and the Proceedings of the Second Arab Conference on Perspectives of Modern Biotechnology. In addition, the secretariat published proceedings of two other workshops - on the implications of new and advanced materials technologies for the economies of ESCWA countries and on the integration of science and technology in the development, planning and management process in the ESCWA region.

138. Under the transport programme, the annual Transport Bulletin was published. A report on follow-up action on the implementation of the ESCWA Transport and Communications Decade was prepared for submission to the Commission. Other studies published in 1994 related to the development of free zones in Western Asia, the development of the telecommunications sector in the ESCWA region, and

the present status, development trends and future prospects of telecommunications in the ESCWA region. In addition, the secretariat held an expert group meeting on maritime hydrographic surveying and nautical charting in Amman and Aqaba from 8 to 12 May 1994.

139. As regards the energy, natural resources and the environment subprogramme, the secretariat continued to publish the annual ESCWA Energy Bulletin. In 1994, it also issued a publication on Energy Information in the ESCWA Region. An ad hoc expert group meeting was held to review the programme of regional organizations active in the field of water resources (Amman, 12-14 September). A report on the progress made in the ESCWA plan to implement Agenda 21 in the region was also presented to the Commission at its seventeenth session, held from 29 to 31 May 1994.

140. Under social development activities, ESCWA organized an ad hoc expert group meeting in preparation for the World Summit for Social Development (Amman, 19-22 September). Following this meeting, the Arab Declaration for Social Development was prepared for submission to the Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs.

141. ESCWA continued to publish the annual Population Bulletin. It also issued the proceedings of the expert group meeting on unemployment in Western Asia and a study entitled Impact of Crisis on the Social Situation in the ESCWA Region.

142. In the area of women and development, the secretariat held the intergovernmental regional preparatory meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Amman, 6-10 November), at which it adopted the Regional Plan of Action for the Advancement of Arab Women. In preparation for this meeting, nine national workshops were held in selected ESCWA countries to review national plans of action in the light of the national reports on the situation of women prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women. In addition, a seminar on the role of the family in integrating disabled women into society was organized (Amman, 16-18 October).

143. Publications concerning women issued by ESCWA in 1994 included the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005; the Review and Assessment of the Progress Achieved for the Advancement of Arab Women in Light of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies; and the Participation of Women in Pharmaceutical and Electronics Industries in Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

144. In the field of human settlements, ESCWA co-organized and participated in the first Arab Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Amman, from 21 to 23 March. In June, the secretariat completed the second phase of activities on the thematic competition "The autonomous village, alternative human settlements planning and design techniques".

145. In 1994, ESCWA continued the development and maintenance of statistical databases on social indicators, the labour force, industry, energy and the environment. It also continued to provide its members with advisory services in

the areas of national accounts, economic statistics, data processing and household surveys.

146. The secretariat continued to publish its annual Statistical Abstract of the ESCWA Region, and its Bulletin of National Accounts. It also published one biennial publication, the External Trade Bulletin of the ESCWA Region, and issued two new publications: the Proceedings of the Western Asia Workshop on Strategies for Accelerating the Development of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems and Arab Women in ESCWA Member States. A workshop on the implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts was held in Amman from 12 to 19 December 1994 and another workshop on industrial statistics took place in Damascus from 26 November to 6 December 1994.

147. Complementing the Commission's activities embodied in its regular work programme, the ESCWA secretariat extended its technical assistance programme in the form of identification, formulation and implementation of technical assistance projects. More important, the Regional Advisory Services provided by ESCWA, which are geared towards serving individual member States in various substantive areas, such as statistics, environment, transport, water, energy, industry, science and technology, have been conducted continuously during 1994 as well.

148. During 1995 and the biennium 1996-1997, ESCWA's work will be planned and implemented according to the programme frame established as a result of the ESCWA restructuring exercise. A multidisciplinary approach, focusing on specific socio-economic development issues as well as a quick and adequate response to the rapidly changing ESCWA regional situation will constitute the backbone of ESCWA activities. Trends to be addressed by ESCWA in the near future will certainly require a more concentrated - but at the same time, more flexible - work frame, including closer cooperation between the secretariat and member countries. Because future developments in the ESCWA region will most probably include rapid changes in a more peaceful environment conducive to launching new development schemes, ESCWA intraregional cooperation will become one of the major tools in designing and coordinating future ESCWA activities.

III. MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

149. The present section of the report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1823 (XVII) and Economic and Social Council resolution 1817 (LV), by which the Secretary-General was requested to submit to the Council, at its substantive sessions, annual reports on the meetings of the executive secretaries of the regional commissions.

150. The executive secretaries met in New York on 26 July 1994, in conjunction with the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, and in New York on 20 February 1995. The 1994 meeting was chaired by the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the 1995 meeting was chaired by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe, each in their capacity as coordinator of the executive secretaries at the time of the meetings. The main issues discussed at those meetings are set out below.

A. Coordination

151. The executive secretaries re-examined the continuing improvement of the coordination and cooperation arrangements in the economic and social fields, in particular as they affected the regional commissions. They welcomed the initiative taken by the Secretary-General by giving that subject prominence and drawing the Organization's attention to it when discussing it at the meeting of senior officials.

152. The executive secretaries were of the opinion that currently many of the issues in the economic and social fields called for concerted international action, both regional and global. Thus the challenge was to establish relationships and cooperation between the two in such a way that the comparative advantages of both were fully exploited to the benefit of member States. The regional commissions possessed an array of comparative advantages which, in the context of proper coordination and cooperation, could enhance their contribution to the Organization in the economic and social fields.

The following points were noted:

(a) Geographical proximity had over the centuries created a complex network of economic and cultural relationships. It had led both to a community of interests, as well as tensions and conflicts, and therefore to a shared perception among countries and people of the same region that they must cooperate for peace and development. Commonality of interest and the need to coexist made possible both a more in-depth analysis and debate, and initiatives or agreements that would be difficult to reach at the global level;

(b) Seen in that historical, geopolitical context the regional commissions enjoyed a number of proven assets and as yet untapped potential. They were a key part of a single, integrated United Nations programme in the economic and social fields. They occupied the intersection between United Nations entities operating at the global level and those with country operations. As such they promoted regional initiatives, development plans and strategies. They also served as channels to the region for global decisions and programmes;

(c) Their programme of work was adapted to the specific needs of each region, including the special needs of newly independent States. They provided well tried and tested intergovernmental machinery, capable of supporting multifaceted cooperation among experts from the public and the private sectors, policy makers and government ministers in elaborating norms and standards, binding legal instruments and regional strategies, even at times when those same Governments could not see eye to eye on the political platform;

(d) The expertise and experience of the regional commissions in a range of economic and social sectors enabled them to take up regional issues of a cross-sectoral nature (sustainable development, poverty eradication, infrastructure development, human development, the transition process). By virtue of their interdisciplinary approach, the activities of the commissions had become intricately interwoven with economic and social programmes of the countries of

the regions they served. Thus they acted as a catalyst for the integration of economic cooperation and development;

(e) In most regions, the commissions offered the only forum in which all countries of the region could participate on an equal footing and without conditions; they could thus be compared favourably with the non-United Nations institutions active at the regional or subregional level. This fact provided a partial response to the recent report on global governance, which recognized the importance of regional cooperation but questioned whether the regional commissions were the bodies to be strengthened. Moreover, within regions, dividing lines were sources of tension: the regional commissions offered a forum for dialogue between the different subregional groupings, a shared umbrella under which harmonization of norms and practices between all the countries of the region could take place;

(f) Despite their small secretariats, the regional commissions were cost effective. Programme delivery was reinforced by strong inputs from Governments. Moreover, the programme of work and the structure of the commissions were subject to an ongoing in-depth review by member Governments to ensure their relevance to the needs and problems of their respective regions.

153. The executive secretaries reaffirmed that in the context of a unitary United Nations, the relationship within the system should be founded on the principle of "subsidiarity", whereby the centre concentrated on issues and programmes which could not be pursued effectively at the local level, thus determining the division of labour.

154. The executive secretaries noted that the establishment of regional coordination arrangements in the context of administrative committees on coordination, which were chaired by the executive secretaries as the principal representatives of the Secretary-General for economic, social and related activities in their respective regions, was an important step in as much as it allowed the regional commissions to play the role of facilitator in promoting a form of inter-agency cooperation among regional representatives which had not been possible before. It had contributed to a new debate on the analysis of regional trends and operational opportunities.

155. In identifying some of the existing obstacles to closer cooperation at the regional level with global entities and funds, the executive secretaries identified a number of issues:

(a) An institutional structure needed to be put into place to facilitate and enable the exchange of information on respective programmes of work;

(b) Efforts needed to be made to remove discrepancies in the geographical areas of responsibility among agencies/organizations;

(c) Legislative bodies needed to be encouraged to adopt the same budget and programme cycle to avoid problems of reporting and meeting schedules;

(d) A common approach needed to be adopted to the degree of decentralized authority in programming matters among the regional offices of various agencies/organizations;

(e) Cooperation with the secretariats of non-United Nations bodies needed to be fostered to promote concerted regional cooperation and development; with a clearer awareness of the technical and political comparative advantages of the United Nations, overlap and dispersion of resources could be avoided.

156. In examining the progress made regarding the relationship between the regional commissions and specific global entities, the meeting concentrated on some specific arrangements, which are discussed below.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

157. Contrary to the perception that there existed some duplication between the work programme of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and that of the regional commissions, the meeting was of the opinion that, for the most part, activities carried out by those bodies meshed to form an integrated pattern and illuminated different perspectives of the issues at hand.

158. Considering the great affinity between the activities, it was suggested that ways of joint programming should be investigated. Beyond this overall objective, the meeting addressed issues concerning the future of the joint units on transnational corporations, now that those activities fell within the purview of UNCTAD and were no longer grouped under an independent centre with a division of labour in fields of common interest. In the areas of trade, environment, macroeconomic policies, privatization, foreign direct investment, technology transfer, the least developed countries and transport, which were covered by UNCTAD and the regional commissions and where regional and global dimensions had to be addressed, cooperative arrangements with UNCTAD should be enhanced. Improved coordination of the work programmes of UNCTAD and the regional commissions would involve identifying specific issues for cooperation or delegation, maximizing complementarities and synergies and possibly introducing forms of division of labour.

Funding agencies

United Nations Development Programme

159. The meeting reviewed and welcomed the progress made in cooperative arrangements between UNDP and the regional commissions. Based on the fruitful work of a UNDP/Regional Commissions Task Force, established in mid-1994, it had been possible to work out an agreement on a number of important issues that, once implemented fully, should have a direct bearing on beneficial cooperation between the entities.

160. The agreement covered four main areas of cooperation and collaboration:

(a) Cooperation in the preparation of the sixth programming cycle of UNDP;

(b) Cooperation in establishing a modus operandi with non-United Nations system partners, including regional development banks;

(c) Cooperation in the mobilization of resources, particularly with a view to finding ways for the regional commissions to increase their delivery of regional programmes and projects;

(d) Collaboration on specific issues on a non-project basis.

161. Agreement was also reached on the measures to be taken towards the implementation of those efforts. These measures fell under six distinct objectives:

(a) To improve mechanisms for regional level coordination;

(b) To set up mechanisms for encouraging/intensifying policy analysis and identification of specific areas;

(c) To deliberate on the incorporation of regional dimensions in country strategy notes;

(d) To set up mechanisms for a two-way exchange of information;

(e) To examine execution/operational modalities of regional programmes;

(f) To set up mechanisms for collaboration on resource mobilization strategies.

162. The executive secretaries particularly welcomed the commitment of UNDP to work on proposals in the next programming framework for review by the Executive Board. That would allow regional commissions to participate in a TSS-1 (technical support of the programme level) kind of mechanism for upstream policy advice, as well as the elaboration of proposals for Executive Board review, which would allow regional commissions to participate at the project level under a TSS-2 (technical support at the project level) kind of facility or the enhanced facility available to smaller agencies. The collaborative effort to recognize efforts under way and bolster them wherever possible to increase the share of regional indicative planning figures was also warmly supported.

United Nations Population Fund

163. The executive secretaries exchanged information regarding the decline in resources available from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for the implementation of population activities carried out jointly with the regional commissions. They compared the impact of that negative trend on their respective population programmes during the past two years.

164. In line with the Secretary-General's instructions, the executive secretaries discussed ways and means to bring about the widest possible collaboration between UNFPA and the regional commissions in the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in September 1994.

165. The hope was expressed that the fruitful collaboration, particularly the variety of joint activities, that had evolved from the 1984 World Population Conference would serve as a example to build on.

166. Concern was expressed regarding full participation of the regional commissions in the coordinating mechanisms, such as the ad hoc task force, that were being set up for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The regional commissions expressed regret that they had not been invited to the 1st meeting, held in December 1994, and were therefore not apprised of the work programme of the task force and its subsidiary bodies. In that regard it was hoped that an arrangement could be worked out for the executive secretaries to be represented in the coordinating mechanisms; for example, one of the executive secretaries could attend on behalf of all the regional commissions. The regional commissions were also looking forward to participating in the working groups in line with their respective competences and areas of interest.

167. It was also mentioned that UNFPA was welcome to join the regional commissions in organizing policy meetings at the regional level to monitor the follow-up to the Conference.

Specialized agencies

168. The meeting discussed the impact of the decision by the Governing Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to strengthen FAO regional offices by withdrawing resources made available to the regional commissions. With four of the commissions having joint FAO/regional commissions divisions on agriculture, the reduction of posts and funds available for consultancies and staff travel would seriously affect the performance of the regional commissions in the area of agriculture. The change in policy, which ran counter to the stated policy of the Secretary-General to strengthen the regional commissions and to decentralize appropriate activities to the regional level was difficult to understand in the light of the excellent results achieved in the long history of the joint units. The new situation was expected to result in an unavoidable overlapping of the responsibilities and mandate of FAO and the regional commissions. It was hoped that the alternative joint collaborative arrangements currently being sought would alleviate the situation.

B. Decentralization

169. The meeting reviewed the status of implementation of the initial round of decentralization of activities and resources to the regional commissions. Beyond this initial round already implemented, the executive secretaries were of the opinion that the decentralization debate within the secretariat, which had been reactivated in 1993, should be pursued further, with a view to identifying additional areas of work where duplication between global programmes and the regional commissions existed, in order to ensure the most appropriate distribution of labour and scarce resources.

Programme of technical cooperation

170. All the regional commissions reported on their experience with the strengthened programme of technical cooperation. In particular, ECE had been able to add a new dimension of services for its member States, especially to attend to the needs of the countries in transition.

Natural resources and energy

171. The meeting reviewed the progress in the implementation of the decentralization measures in the field of natural resources and energy. It was noted that, contrary to initial plans, implementing the decentralization of posts in the area of natural resources and energy from the global programme to the regional commissions had been delayed and experienced a slow start. Since the establishment of the Management Board of the United Nations Technical Cooperation Programme in Natural Resources and Energy, which had held two meetings during the period under review, progress had been made, particularly in the area of joint programming exercises. Following the setting up of a coordination mechanism at the working level between the global programme and that of the regional commissions, the meeting agreed to pursue new sources of possible additional funding, particularly in the area of joint programming exercises, as well as ways and means of accessing TSS-1 allocations.

Authority on administrative matters

172. The meeting expressed wholehearted support regarding planned initiatives for the decentralization of authority for some administrative matters and was of the opinion that such measures were long overdue. It was hoped that the proposed decentralization measures would reduce administrative red tape and render the organizations' operations more efficient and accountable.

C. Follow-up to global conferences

173. The regional commissions recounted their varied and numerous support for the global conferences that had taken place during the period under review or were scheduled to be held in the near future. It was recalled that the regional commissions had been active participants in the preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in September 1995. In each case, the commissions had been instrumental in organizing, servicing and providing substantive support to the regional meetings, which had resulted in the preparation of regional platforms and action plans, often without the provision of adequate resources. Particularly in the area of social policy formulation and development - with respect to population and women, for example - the elaboration of a region's specific contribution was of vital importance.

174. In addition to the difficulties encountered by the regional commissions in the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, mentioned above, the executive secretaries expressed concern, in general, regarding the level of involvement of the regional commissions in the follow-up

mechanisms to major conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations. Difficulties encountered in that regard were not confined to events held only recently; they had already emerged with the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the mechanisms established in connection with the issue of sustainable development.

D. Agenda for development

175. The meeting reviewed the provisions related to the work and functioning of the regional commissions contained in the Secretary-General's proposed agenda for development. They concluded that the Secretary-General's proposals firmly established the regional commissions as the regional arm of the United Nations.

176. This concept implied a much closer relationship and interaction between the global programmes and the regional commissions, a development much welcomed by the executive secretaries. Within this new relationship it should be easier to define more clearly the division of labour between the various programmes of the United Nations. In this new framework the regional commissions would be called upon to link the concepts of global problems with the regional dimensions. Given the diversity in the "global village", the activities of the United Nations in each region would become a much more critical issue, with primary responsibility at the regional level attributed to the regional commissions.

177. The meeting was briefed about the continuing review process by the intergovernmental organs envisaged to culminate in the adoption of the agenda for development by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. A brief discussion ensued on what possible support the regional commissions could lend to the deliberations of the intergovernmental working group established to finalize the agenda for development.

E. Preparations for the Economic and Social Council

178. The meeting discussed the experience gained during the substantive session of 1994 of the Economic and Social Council - which had been conducted under the new rules and format established with a view to revitalizing the Council - with respect to the handling of the agenda item on regional cooperation and to the participation of the regional commissions in the high-level, coordination and operational activities segments.

179. It was regretted that the new schedule had resulted in a reduction of the time available for the item on regional cooperation. Bearing in mind the fact that the regional commissions did not report directly to the General Assembly, the Council thus becoming the supreme intergovernmental forum where regional cooperation matters were being discussed, the continued reduction in time made it difficult for the regional commissions to address the Council properly and for delegations to embark on an in-depth discussion which would provide the guidance sought. Considering the nature of the item on regional cooperation, it was hoped that in the future the Council could devote adequate time to it earlier in the session - that would give delegations sufficient time to engage in consultations with a view to drafting resolutions.

180. The meeting noted that the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council of 1995 would be devoted to the consideration of the theme "Development of Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa" in the 1990s. The meeting was briefed on the work that had been undertaken by ECA on this subject in the past and the preparations envisaged for the forthcoming discussion. It was noted that the Administrative Committee on Coordination, at its second regular session of 1994, had also discussed the subject and that, on the basis of that discussion, the Secretary-General had embarked on developing further initiatives with a view to enhancing United Nations system support for Africa. This effort was to be concluded at the Committee's second regular session of 1995.

181. The meeting discussed the preparations for the launching of the regional commissions project entitled "Interregional cooperation in social development: the impact of international migration in countries of destination and countries of origin". It was recalled that the executive secretaries had initially proposed the subject for consideration by the Council at its substantive session of 1994. Unfortunately, due to severe time constraints at that session, it was not possible to conduct an in-depth review, in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1982/174, and bring the matter to a fruitful conclusion. In view of the importance of the subject and the interest that all regions shared in it, the executive secretaries had proposed the subject again.

182. A discussion followed on how best to incorporate the work carried out by the regional commissions in the field of migration in any global efforts for a conference on migration, possibly scheduled for 1997. In that connection, the meeting briefly discussed the long list of critical issues that contributed to the complex issue of migration and on which extensive analytical work would have to be carried out. It was felt that each of the regional commissions was uniquely placed to contribute a region-specific analysis of the underlying causes. A number of technical meetings were envisaged as the first round of a global analysis of migration issues.

F. Fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations

183. The meeting held a brief exchange of views on the progress made by each regional commission in the preparations for the commemoration and celebration for the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization.

G. Date and venue of the next meeting of the executive secretaries

184. The executive secretaries agreed that their next meeting would be held in conjunction with the substantive session of 1995 of the Economic and Social Council, in Geneva.

IV. INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN COUNTRIES OF DESTINATION AND COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

A. Background

185. By decision 1995/206 on regional cooperation, the Economic and Social Council, taking into account the joint recommendations made by the executive secretaries of the regional commissions pursuant to Council decision 1982/174, decided to consider at its substantive session of 1995 the question entitled "Interregional cooperation in social development: the impact of international migration in countries of destination and countries of origin". Accordingly, the present section contains concrete proposals for interregional cooperation in social development, focusing on international migration issues. It contains the proposals for various activities that were submitted to the Council at its substantive session of 1994, which preceded the adoption of General Assembly resolution 49/127 on international migration and development. Therefore, the proposed activities should not be perceived as emanating from that resolution but should be considered in their own right. However, they can contribute to any activities that may be initiated as a result of the adoption of the resolution. The proposed activities are fully in line with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, which gave substantial prominence to international migration.

186. The present section first reviews current activities in the field of international migration at the regional level, including those of the regional commissions. It then introduces proposals on possible future cooperation activities. It should be stressed that only some of these activities can be undertaken by the regional commissions, given their resource limitations. Which of the proposed activities will be carried out will depend, among other things, on the views of the Council and the resources available to the regional commissions. A number of the activities set out below may prove useful to the conference on international migration, should such conference be mandated.

B. Present activities at the regional level

187. There is no question that in recent years the interest of Governments, international organizations, academic institutions and the general public in international migration has increased. This is reflected in the attention given to the subject by institutions and the activities carried out by them, from which a wealth of knowledge has been developed. Nevertheless, available knowledge about the magnitude and composition of migration streams, and the causes and consequences for countries of destination and countries of origin is inadequate and insufficient for informed policy-making. What follows is by no means a complete inventory of the available knowledge; however, it provides a reasonably general overview, in particular of the activities under way within the United Nations system.

188. Two international bodies are concerned with specific aspects of international migration only, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In

addition to its major concerns of providing appropriate services to refugees/ migrants, UNHCR has a reasonably good idea of the numbers of refugees by country of origin and their current location. The overwhelming majority of IOM activities are also concerned with services for migrants. In 1993, however, IOM launched a research project entitled "Analysis of present and future emigration dynamics in developing countries: sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean".

189. The Population Division and the Statistical Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis of the Secretariat gather, analyse and publish data on international migration. OECD has been monitoring migration mostly to its member countries with the help of national correspondents in a "Continuous reporting system on migration" (the SOPEMI system).

190. In preparation of the International Conference on Population and Development, all the regional commissions organized their respective regional conferences during 1992 and 1993. Documents, papers and recommendations from these conferences dealt with issues of international migration in the respective regions and in relation to the other regions. In addition, one of the six expert group meetings in preparation for the Conference was on the topic of population distribution and migration.

191. The regional commissions, as well as other regional bodies and country institutions, have been involved in assessing the status and importance of international migration in their regions. The activities include:

(a) Data compilation and the monitoring of migration flows;

(b) Research on relevant issues and subsequent reports;

(c) Preparation of periodic publications;

(d) Seminars and meetings;

(e) Intergovernmental policy coordination.

1. Data compilation and the monitoring of migration flows

192. ECLAC provides technical assistance to individual countries on compiling data on international migration. ECLAC has an "IMILA" (Investigación de la migración internacional en Latinoamérica) programme that utilizes censuses to compile overviews of foreign-born populations. ECE has implemented a "rapid information system" designed to collect data and information on flows of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, as well as on recent policy developments and major meetings.

2. Research on relevant issues and subsequent reports

193. In the South-East Asia and Pacific Region an Asian Regional Programme on International Labour Migration (ILO/UNDP) ended in early 1994. Under this project a research study on the impact of the Persian Gulf crisis on South-Asian countries, remittances and development, and migration pressure was conducted.

194. ECE has a UNFPA-funded project on international migration in the region for the period 1992-1995. This includes a comprehensive multi-country effort on the mechanisms, determinants and consequences of international migration, focusing on central and eastern Europe, which is based on in-depth surveys. Other parts of the ECE project include studies on international migration in 11 central and eastern European countries; a comparative study of international migration policies in the ECE region; studies by national experts on irregular transit migration through central Europe to the West.

3. Preparation of periodic publications

195. In the ESCAP region, the Scalabrini Migration Center in the Philippines publishes the Asian Migrant, a magazine of current migration issues. This Center also publishes a professional journal, the Asian and Pacific Migration Journal. The Population Activities Unit of ECE prepares the International Migration Bulletin, a semi-annual publication providing an up-to-date overview on flows of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, as well as important legislative changes and reports on major meetings. OECD/SOPEMI publishes an annual report entitled Trends in International Migration.

4. Seminars and meetings

196. All the regional commissions have been organizing seminars and meetings, essentially on the various issues mentioned above.

5. Intergovernmental policy coordination

197. Several bodies were created in the Europe/North America region (none under the auspices of ECE) to deal with coordinating the policies of the western countries. Some were concerned primarily with South-North migration, others with East-West migration or with both South-North and East-West migration. These include the Intergovernmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies in Europe, North America and Australia, the so-called Vienna Process (periodic meetings of senior government officials of European and North American Governments to deal with East-West migration); and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

C. Proposed activities

198. In assisting Governments to design policies to deal with contemporary issues of international migration, the regional commissions can draw on a wealth of past substantive and organizational experience. The activities proposed below need not be conducted in all regions. Some will be primarily intraregional; however, if conducted in several regions, the comparison of results between regions can be mutually beneficial. Others will be comparative interregional studies by design.

199. Collaboration between the United Nations and other international organizations, in particular UNHCR, ILO, IOM, the World Bank and OECD is indispensable.

200. The proposed activities are as follows:

(a) Each region may conduct a study on the main flows of international migration in and to the region and provide an overview of stocks of foreigners and foreign-born populations. The focus would be on the most important flows, such as those from Africa to western Europe and to the oil-rich countries;

(b) Each region may conduct a study of the main international migration policies of the principal countries of origin and principal countries of destination in the region. The focus would be on the prominent countries/policies of the region;

(c) Regions may select issues of major concern with respect to relations between countries of origin and countries of destination. Studies could be conducted within regions or through interregional collaboration on such issues as:

(i) The maximizing of benefits to both labour-importing and labour-exporting countries;

(ii) Relationship between foreign direct investment, trade and labour migration;

(iii) The social impact of labour migration in sending and receiving countries;

(iv) The improvement of financial arrangements and material conditions (channels for remittances, pension rights, worker's compensation, insurance coverage);

(v) Manpower planning in sending and receiving countries;

(vi) Repatriation and resettlement programmes for refugees;

(d) Regions may select issues of major concern regarding the consequences of migration. Studies could be conducted on such topics as:

(i) The consequences of loss of qualified manpower (brain drain);

(ii) The social, economic, political and environmental consequences of refugee movements;

(iii) The health impact of international migration flows;

(e) Regions may decide to conduct studies exploring the mechanisms, determinants and motivations of international migration with the help of in-depth surveys at the family and the individual levels;

(f) Regional commissions may decide to start issuing periodic publications utilizing the accumulated experience of those institutions that are already doing so;

(g) Regional commissions will continue to conduct meetings, consultations and seminars on selected topics of major importance. Interregional meetings, consultations or seminars could be convened on issues of interest to some or all regional commissions;

(h) Intraregional or interregional policy coordinating mechanisms could be established provided the need was well justified;

(i) Regional commissions may initiate activities conducive to the implementation of actions and recommendations related to international migration contained in the Plan of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as in the resolutions and recommendations of regional population meetings and conferences.

201. To guarantee effective interregional collaboration and coordination, while maintaining a great degree of decentralization, the proposed activities would have to be directed by one of the regional commissions. The coordinating institution, in consultation with all the regions, would be responsible for drawing up general plans and organizing meetings, seminars and consultations. One meeting is needed as a start-up for the project and to set priorities for work. Other meetings would be appropriate to evaluate the results of work and exchange experiences.